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### Operationalising a QLR on social change and whiteness in South African 1770s – 1970s

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## **Operationalizing a QLR project on social change and whiteness in South Africa, 1770s – 1970s**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Whites Writing Whiteness project is concerned with changes to the racial order in South Africa over a long time-period and connects 'big numbers' and work on very large archive collections with close textual analysis of particular documents. It uses longitudinal data within a QLR methodological approach, combining formal analysis with a sampling process. In operationalizing this, letters from the Findlay Family collection with thousands of documents, a group of around 190 letters by Elizabeth Price, and a small set of Gottlob Schreiner's letters, are discussed. In doing so, useful conceptual and methodological tools for analysing other large longitudinal datasets are provided.

### **INTRODUCTION**

What is the best way to research and explain social change? Why did South Africa develop the racial order known as apartheid and how did democracy come to succeed it? What part did ordinary white people play in this and how did they represent 'race' to each other? Whites Writing Whiteness ([www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)) is exploring how white people in South Africa wrote about whiteness and its racialised 'Others', including African, mixed 'race' and white people of different ethnic groups, between the 1770s and the 1970s, and its response to these questions is to carry out a Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) project. In this it uses longitudinal data that is prospective because written as events unfold and not retrospectively looking back on them, and is as uninterruptedly joined up as possible rather

than cross-sectional slices of time (although in practice QLR researchers have taken up a variety of positions on this; see Thomson, 2007; also Ruspini, 1999; Thomson and Holland, 2003; Lewis, 2007). In doing so, it has adopted a formal analysis (Simmel, 2009) way of working with longitudinal data, in its case letter-writing between people in a number of different networks over the time-period of interest, and it combines ‘big numbers’ with close textual analysis of particular documents.

South Africa is rich in large family and other archive collections. Taken together, these have temporal reach over this entire period, with their contents primarily letters but also epistolary-related writings such as cards, telegrams, wills, testimonies, reminiscences and so on. The case for analysis is the letter, not particular letter-writers, with the composing flow of letters over time having strong figurational characteristics (Elias, 2000, 2007). There are few weeks without letters in one or more of the research collections being written and received. And while obviously none of the 1770s letter-writers are still writing in the 1970s, the letters themselves, in overlapping flows and often exchanged with people in the same figuration, continue without significant break. Most such collections are largely complete, in the sense that all the letters that were written appear to be present, with any attrition or gaps being naturally-occurring and analytically interesting rather than methodologically worrying.

South Africa is an analytical hotspot for thinking about social change, having moved in a comparatively short time through major socio-economic transitions with complicated social changes also occurring, imbricated by and also constitutive of its emergent and increasingly binary racial order (Stanley et al, 2010; Lester et al, 2000). WWW builds on earlier research on the letters of South African feminist writer and social theorist Olive Schreiner (1855-1920), a major commentator on these changes, with her letters especially important in this regard (*Olive Schreiner Letters Online*; Stanley and Salter, 2014). WWW recognises that letters are an important index of change, as letter-writing is highly responsive

to changing social conventions. That is, the genre properties (how ‘a letter’ is defined and recognised) are porous and morph over time, not just letter-content. Letters are also written prospectively and without foreknowledge (rather than having the retrospective character of much QLR and other qualitative data); they express a point of view and give insight into the evaluative frames of a writer in dialogue with their addressees; and correspondences are an over-time serial form organised around unfolding temporality (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958; Stanley, 2015a; also Deckard, 1998; Barton and Hall, 1999). Letters are therefore a particularly apposite data-source for WWW, enabling changes in how people represent their relationships and interactions with others in the moral order of their letter-writings to be mapped in a prospective and fully longitudinal way.

The collections referred to contain letters predominantly by white people, from different language groups and diverse European origins, including the relatively well-to-do and comparative down-at-heel, with sometimes radical changes in family and personal fortunes over time. That these collections are filled with white writing is, in project terms at least, not a problem but key to investigative concerns (Coetzee, 1988). WWW’s focus is on the changing moral order of ‘race’ as represented by South African whites, exploring how their letters represent whiteness and its various ‘Others’, as shown in the ‘race’ and related categorisations they use. Letters are a representational medium and, indeed, it is their representational aspects WWW is particularly interested in; but at the same time and importantly, they have strong referential aspects, being both about and a component of an external ‘real world’. Also, given the trajectory of change in South Africa over the research period with regard to ‘race’ matters, WWW takes these changing epistolary representations of whiteness and its ‘Others’, with appropriate analytical caution, as a proxy for gauging wider social change.

So how is this approach being operationalized?

## OPERATIONALIZING A QLR APPROACH

WWW uses data from five or six (the exact number will eventuate from further fieldwork) family and related collections, plus a cluster of smaller-scale case studies attached to each.<sup>1</sup> The main collections are worked on by recording meta-data (date, writer, recipient, address...) for all documents and providing in-depth content for a one-in-five sample of them. Case studies are mainly recorded in their entirety, although a few larger ones are necessarily worked by drawing a sample. Recording 'in-depth content' means that material regarding 'race', labour, land and boundaries is covered in detail and extracts (or the entirety) also transcribed. An example follows.

Elizabeth Lees Price nee Moffat (1839-1919), known as Bessie, was the daughter of missionaries. She married another missionary, Roger Price, in 1861, with the couple being the working unit, not solely the man who was ordained. There are 193 epistolary items, mainly lengthy letters, written by Bessie between 1854 and 1904. These are part of a set of linked case studies spanning the period 1817 to 1930. Other interconnected family letter-writings are by Bessie's mother Mary Smith Moffat and father Robert Moffat, her eldest sister Mary who married David Livingstone, Livingstone himself, her brother John Smith Moffat and his wife Jane Unwin Moffat, John and Jane's eldest son Robert Unwin Moffat and his wife Hilda Vavasseur who was a daughter of Bessie's older sister Helen, with additional case studies drawn from these.<sup>2</sup> The Price letters also interface with those of missionary colleagues, including John Mackenzie, a missionary-cum-administrator and long-term colleague of Roger Price; James Read senior and James Read junior, radical missionaries with a prickly relationship to the Moffats and Prices; and Gottlob Schreiner, Olive Schreiner's father, a missionary moving in the same circles until the later 1850s.<sup>3</sup> The main collection here is the extremely large London Missionary Society (LMS) collection of

letters received from South Africa.<sup>4</sup> The case studies add up to some thousand letters; while the main collection is around 20,000 items. Bessie Price's letters are returned to later.

This is one of the letter-writing figurations WWW is researching, and will be joined by four or five more main collections and associated case studies. Eventually the letter-writings of slave plantation owners, people living through Eastern Cape frontier wars, farming households, traders, mine owners and venture capitalists, lawyers and politicians will be added. The result will be over 100,000 documents, a sizeable dataset in any terms. This large amount of qualitative longitudinal data is being managed and its analysis aided by a project-designed Virtual Research Environment (VRE), building on and extending the VRE developed for the earlier Schreiner project. More detail is provided on the WWW website ([www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)), but for VRE read bespoke software written to deliver the exact tools wanted to aid analysis of this particular kind of data within a QLR framework.

Rather than the variable-based thematic analysis (gender, age, education...) that most CAQDAS software users deploy, WWW is carrying out four interconnected methodological activities: (i) A formal analysis of each collection is being made, using the recorded meta-data to point up interesting changes, gaps and so on in the composing letter-writing. (ii) Once letters are identified as potentially interesting by this means, they are analysed using a documentary analysis and 'documents of life' approach (Prior, 2003; Stanley, 2013) to provide detailed readings of specific content (Stanley and Dampier, 2013; Stanley, 2015b). (iii) Also, a membership categorisation analysis (MCA) is being made of particular letters, with MCD (membership categorisation device) information recorded for all letters regarding 'race', ethnicity, land, labour and boundaries (see Jayussi, 1984; Silverman, 1998). (iv) In addition, regarding some seismic events in South Africa – Tigerkloof strikes 1907, Lovedale riots 1919, school-student riots 1947, Sharpeville shootings 1970, Soweto massacre 1977 - an

event-structure analysis is examining how their perceived causes and meanings were represented.<sup>5</sup>

The formal analysis underpins the other aspects of WWW's methodology by focusing on the form or structure of the data, thereby helping direct attention to particular series and sequences of letters with interesting or out of the ordinary formal features. This draws on Simmel's formal sociology in abstracting from the particulars to focus on core elements, in his case time, number, sociality and value, to think analytically about social phenomena (Simmel, 2009). The formal elements of particular interest to WWW are time, series, sequence, variance, duration, interval, number and connection. These elements have been arrived at iteratively, working back and forth between analysing sets of WWW letters, abstracting formal ideas, further analysing runs of letters using formal properties, and so on.

Using a formal analysis as the basis and deploying the other strategies around this maximises the investigative possibilities because a formal approach acts as a kind of Geiger-counter in identifying analytically rich seams of data. This is now explored concerning the Findlay letters, a large family collection; the Bessie Price case study mentioned earlier; and a small case study of letters from Gottlob Schreiner to his then-employers, the Directors of the LMS.

## **A FORMAL ANALYSIS**

The Findlay Family collection is of around 6000 epistolary items, some composed of several documents, and runs from the 1780s to the 1930s. Because of its size, because initial work was done on it as part of the Schreiner project, and because design work for the WWW database used it, it became the focus of initial WWW methodological discussions about how scale can be combined with depth of analysis. Because outline meta-data information was already collected, work began with the collection as a whole. In addition, a small group of

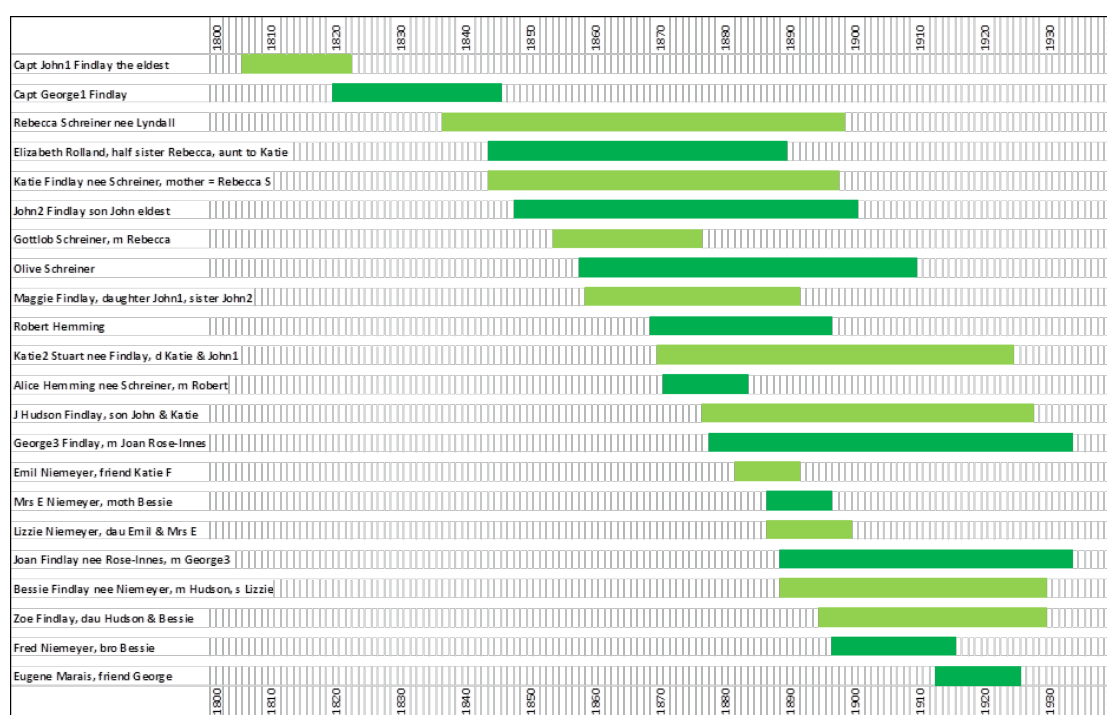
randomly selected Findlay letters was analysed, as part of working out how to sample WWW's larger collections. The first, last and middle years in which letters in the collection were written, plus five equidistant years between these, were selected and three letters randomly selected from each year and their content analysed, a total of twenty-four letters. The sample letters are returned to later.

***Figuration, the case, series, connection:***

A formal analysis of the collection was carried out, which is best explained starting with figuration and the unit of analysis, and the formal elements of series and connection. The concept of figuration derives from the work of Norbert Elias (2000, 2007; see 'Project Overview/Thinking with Norbert Elias' at [www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)). For Elias, social life is always ongoing, a sociogenesis: it is never in stasis, always in process and its ontology is of perpetual becoming. He uses the concept of figuration to convey the 'one thing following another' character of social life and likens figuration to a dance. A dance involves many people and goes on over time; people, who are likely to know some but not all of the other dancers, join and leave, but the dancing continues; and none of those dancing at say 10pm are still there dancing away at 4am, although the dance itself lasts the entire time. All the collections WWW is concerned with, including Findlay, have figural characteristics.



**Figure 1 Forbes Figuration**



The Findlay collection contains many interconnected series of letters. Figure 1 shows a sub-set, with the people whose names are shown being both writers and recipients of letters. The exchanges shown include Olive Schreiner, her parents Rebecca and Gottlob, aunt Elizabeth Rolland and eldest sister Katie Findlay, also Katie's husband John the younger, their son Hudson, grandson George, among others. It graphically conveys the joining and leaving character of continuing figuration – the Findlay letters shown here run from 1806 to 1933 and there are few weeks when letters are not sent and received.

Figure 1 also conveys that the case or unit of analysis is not the people who write or receive letters, for they do indeed come and go, join and depart the letter-writing figuration. This is instead the exchanges of letters over time within the figuration as a whole. The term series was used above in referring to these exchanges and the unfolding temporal progression of letter-writing as attached to particular named people. Each of these names, then, represents a series composed by correspondence, by exchanges of letters over time.

In addition, while WWW is interested in the content and representational modes of letter-writing, it is also concerned with its exchange dynamics and the connections these maintain between people. Correspondence has a strong ‘I-to-and-from-You’ and ‘between’ ontology - the letter-writer becomes addressee, who replies and in turn becomes letter-writer (Stanley et al, 2012). This introduces the formal element of connection, of bridging interrupted presence and longer-term absence between people through letters sent and replied to, with the ‘between’ and ‘exchange’ character of letter-writing fundamental to the genre.

Mapping these figurational aspects of letter exchanges and connections provides pointers for where further investigation might be useful. Thus among other things, Figure 1 shows the limited, spasmodic character of Marais letters in the Findlay exchanges, originating in social connections between Katie Findlay and this family. In addition, there is a temporally-focused group of letters from Eugene Marais to Hudson’s son George, a close friend. Later discussion will consider their significance, as they stand out by comparison and so were focused on.

### ***Sequence, variance, temporal order, interval:***

The next formal elements of sequence, variance, temporal order and interval are discussed in relation to the Bessie Price letters. The extant Price letters, written between 1854 and 1904, are mainly very long and have a complicated character (eg. journals with multiple dates addressed and sent to other people, letters with multiple dates written in journal format also sent). Figure 2 shows their distribution according to addressees.

Price - Addressees by Year	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
Reminiscences		■	■	■	■	■	■
Jeanie M, sis		■	■	■	■	■	■
Helen Vavasour, sis			■				
Friends in England			■				
Children, oldest 4			■	■	■	■	■
Christian, dau						■	■
Sons & daughters all						■	

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**Figure 3 Price letters to oldest children, numbers per month**

**Price - Letters to (the 4 eldest) Children by Month, 1879 - 1893**

	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883	
Jan	2	2	3	3	-	
Feb	4	4	3	1	-	
Mar	6	4	4	2	-	
April	4	5	3	-	-	
May	4	5	2	1	1	
June	1	5	3	-	2	
July	5	6	2	-	-	
Aug	3	4	1	1	-	
Sept	3	5	2	1	-	
Oct	4	4	2	1	-	
Nov	5	4	2	-	1	
Dec	2	4	3	-	-	<b>Totals:</b>
<b>Total letters</b>	43	52	30	10	4	139 (= range of dates) 126 (= actual letters)

The distribution of Bessie Price's letters to her four eldest children, who were taken to school in Britain in 1879 and stayed there until 1884, indicates an increase in letters in 1880 over 1879, and what seems a fairly sharp decrease from 1881 to 1883. However, looking at the actual numbers of letters per month, shown in Figure 3, suggests something more nuanced. The variance occurring on a month-by-month basis in 1879 and 1880 is not so marked as just plotting series overall might imply, and even the 1881 monthly counts suggest a more gentle decrease here too. Even so, 1882 and 1883 stand out because there are actual breaks in sequencing, not just increases and decreases, so variance here is marked and indicates something useful to investigate further. Bessie Price's 'Reminiscences' and Price family letters more generally provide a clue. The children in Britain initially lived together with a relative, but in 1882 they went to different schools in different places, with their mother's letters sent between them. It seems possible that one of the children along the line did not receive, or did not keep, some letters, with there having been more written than are now extant.

Letters involve different moments of writing, sending, reading and replying and traverse different times, with their ‘over time’ aspects crucial. A formal analysis can help unpack these temporal dimensions, which when closely examined are not always straightforward. Figure 4 details twenty-three Bessie Price letters to ‘My darling children’ from January to July 1879. The majority, sixteen, have multiple dates demarcating their internal content, which raises interesting questions concerning what a letter is and its beginning and ending. Regarding the letter dated 28 May to 25 June, for instance, is this more appropriately seen as one letter or twenty-nine, given the separately dated and demarcated pieces of writing it contains, each added as Price waited for ‘opportunity’ (meeting someone *en route* who could take letters to a posting-place)?

**Figure 4 Price oldest children letters Jan to July 1879 x dates and place**

Price - Letters to Children, March - July 1879

1879 letter date/s	No. dates	No. places	Place names
2 March	1	1	Strand St, CT
5-7 March	3	1	Strand St, CT
10 March	1	1	Strand St, CT
17-18 March	2	1	The hill, PE
23-27 March	5	1	The hill, PE
31 Mar-7 April	8	1	The hill, PE
12 April	1	1	The hill, PE
16-22 April	7	5	Aberdeen Rd, nr PE, river, nr G-R, G-R
27-30 April	4	1	A cottage, G-R
2 May	1	1+	Between F-R & Middelburg
6-7 May	2	1+	Between M & Philipolis
9-21 May	13	4	Orange River, Hockley's farm, Kimberley, Barkly
28 May-25 June	29	11+	Between Barkly & Taung, Taung, Morimon,
			Mokala, nr Marietsane River, Monteive's town,
			Molemi's town, more than a day off Kanye, past
			Lalaue, between Kanye & Molepolole, sand river near home
3 July	1	1	Molepolole
9-10 July	2	1	Molepolole
13-17 July	5	1	Molepolole
26-28 July	3	1	Molepolole
27-31 July	5	1	Molepolole

Temporal order, then, is an important but often complex aspect of formal analysis. Also, considering the time of letters brings to attention their spatial aspects: where, as well as

when, they were written, and read. As noted earlier, letters as a genre are always marked by their ‘between’ ontology, with the letters in Figure 4 having this characteristic in spades. Moving between what are long but now quick to traverse distances, for the Prices was long and slow and with ‘between’ often as specific as place could be. Figure 4 shows the complexities of the spatial location of the Price parents and younger children, returning from Britain after leaving the four eldest there, as they moved from a ship, to a boarding house, to an ox-wagon wending its way over six months of travelling between Cape Town and Molepolole.

Temporal interval as well as variance can indicate something interesting, while recognising that ‘similar’ intervals can have very different meaning, once the content of what is on either side is explored. Considering a small sequence of Bessie Price letters from January to May 1900 to ‘Sons and daughters all’ is helpful in explaining this formal element. This is the only sequence addressed so and stands out when glancing through the letters. The context was the final illness then death on 21 January 1900 of Roger Price, with the seven surviving Price children at that time living overseas or long distances away. But even so, Bessie Price’s letters after their father’s death are in the circumstances oddly irregular; and also oddly, content shows these occasioned no response. The background circumstances were the South African War (1899-1902) and the occupation of the area the Prices lived in by a Boer commando that enforced martial law, prohibitions on travel and censorship of letters. These restrictions particularly affected the mission-station’s occupants, including the Prices, who were perceived as trouble-making liberals, and with one of them, Rev John Tom Brown, forcibly expelled from the area.

The intervals marking the irregular temporal gaps between these letters are eye-catching. Content indicates that duplicate letters were written and sent but are no longer extant; and there are also signs of additional letters that were sent but never arrived. In

addition, unpacking the addressees of these letters is complex. Thus between January and March, one letter was dispatched with John Tom Brown when he was expelled, others were sent with passing traders, and all were addressed to third parties for them to post on, with just the inner ‘letters within letters’ addressed to ‘Sons and daughters all’. In addition, even in April and early May, some months after her husband’s death, Bessie Price still did not know if her letters had arrived, for she had received no replies, and the letters of inquiry she then dispatched were sent with local farming women with permission to move out of the war-zone, again top-addressed to third parties to send on. As this example shows, interval and its size and meaning can be important in highlighting analytical possibilities, in this case by pointing investigation towards the relationship between micro-matters of how letters are addressed and sent, content ones concerning life and death and non/response, and macro-matters regarding war and retribution.

### ***Duration and number:***

The remaining formal elements of duration and number are now discussed by returning to the Findlay collection. Duration is the span or persistence of a series or a sequence; it is temporal in character and so concerns longevity of correspondence. Number involves counts of cases, series, sequences and figurations, and also concerns the number of these seen as appropriate for a particular analytical task in hand. The temptation, however, is to think that duration or longevity, and number or size, are important in themselves. But, long/short, big/little, are not of value in *a priori* terms but evaluative pointers to things that might be investigated further.

Katie Findlay – Olive Schreiner’s eldest sister - was a ‘queen bee’ in the Findlay letters as a node of focused epistolary activity, in the way her father-in-law John Findlay the elder was before her, and then her son Hudson, followed by grandson George and his wife Joan Rose-Innes, were after her. She is a major figure across the Findlay letters for a lengthy

time and concerning large numbers of exchanges – more than fifty-three years and over 1600 letters. Many are duty letters, from children at school, husband away trading, routine letters to and from family and friends on anniversaries and occasions; and many are of a ‘just a word to say we are all well’ kind and largely quotidian. They are interesting in their ordinariness and especially *en masse*, being to and from an uneducated back-country woman with many children who was managing a large farming and trading household, and who as a consequence is unusually well-documented as such. Size and duration are crucial to the analytical point here.

Eugene Marias is a major figure in South African Afrikaans-language literature (Swart 2004), as well as a lawyer friend of lawyer George Findlay, with the Maraises being family friends. There are just fifty-eight letters written over a short twelve year period, with most from Marais to George. But what letters they are: long, exuberant, with content packed with literary and political ideas and opinions, and they burst into the mass of quotidian dutifulness in the collection with the noisy conceit of a peacock among sparrows. Size and duration are something of an irrelevance, while the content is mega.

This is cheese and chalk, fish and bicycles, regarding using size and duration to make any evaluative comparisons. That is, both series of letters can be plotted formally by reference to their duration and number (big/little, long/short), but any comparisons based just on these measures would be seriously misleading.

## **LETTER CONTENT AND MEMBERSHIP CATEGORISATIONS**

A formal analysis, then, raises a range of interesting issues concerning the figurations of white South African letter-writing, and working from these structural elements of collections and sequences to letter content demonstrates the important referential aspects of people’s lives and how they represent them which underly these formal elements. But how can this be



used to pinpoint the representation of ‘race’ and ethnicity? This is pursued regarding some letters by Gottlob Schreiner (1814-1876), who was an LMS missionary at the time of their writing. There are few letters to Gottlob in the Findlay collection and just one by him, an interesting but so far an inexplicable gap in these family letters. There are however more letters archived elsewhere, specifically in the Schreiner-Hemming papers and the LMS collection. For logistical reasons, discussion here concerns the LMS ones, together with a smaller number Gottlob wrote over the same time-period to the Basle Society in Switzerland where he trained prior to attending theological college and being ordained in London.

The non-denominational LMS expected regular letters as reports from its missionaries, usually every few months, providing details of their spiritual and practical endeavours. Gottlob Schreiner and his wife Rebecca left for South Africa in 1838 on the ship ‘David Scott’. Figure 5 shows his letters to the LMS Directors were irregular, there are sizeable gaps in writing, most are grouped in 1842, and they stop in 1846. Taking his letters to his Basle Society mentors also into consideration shows he wrote to Basle twice before first contacting the LMS at the start of working for it in 1838, and later there is another sequence of letters to Basle, in 1842.

Another 1842 LMS letter filed about Gottlob Schreiner should be noted, dated 26 May. This is by his superiors in South Africa – John Philip, the LMS Director there, and James Read senior, in charge of the particular district Gottlob worked in – and sent to the LMS London Directors. It reports on the investigation of misconduct charges against him from other missionaries and congregations, principally in Philipolis. Its existence suggests that Gottlob Schreiner’s burst of epistolary activity in 1842 could be connected and perhaps a response to the investigation, and later letters show there were further complaints. Gottlob’s three 1846 letters to the LMS culminated in his resignation, having pre-arranged transfer to

the Wesleyan Missionary Society. This is announced in the third 1846 letter, while communication with his Basle mentors had ceased earlier.

**Figure 5 Gottlob Schreiner, LMS and Basle Society letters**

Date	To	Mission station from
Dec 1838	Basle Soc	on-board ship
Jan 1838	Basle Soc	on-board ship
2 Feb - 12 Mar 1838	LMS	on-board ship
6 Aug 1838	LMS	Kat River
17 Jan 1839	LMS	Philipolis
24 Oct 1839	LMS	Philipolis
1 Sept 1840	LMS	Philipolis
5 Oct 1840	Basle Soc	?
24 Dec 1840	LMS	Philipolis
3 June 1841	Basle Soc	?
7 June 1841	LMS	Philipolis
18 Aug 1841	LMS	Philipolis
24 Dec 1841	LMS	Philipolis
26 May 1842	LMS	Philipolis from JPHILIP & JREAD
4 June 1842	Basle Soc	Philipolis
23 June 1842	LMS	Philipolis
13 July 1842	LMS	Bethany
28 July 1842	LMS	Thaba 'Nchu
Aug 1842	Basle Soc	Thaba Pachae [aka Basel]
19 Aug 1842	LMS	Basel
29 Aug 1842	Basle Soc	Colesberg
4 April 1842	Basle Soc	Colesberg
30 Sept 1842	LMS	Beersheba
20 Oct 1842	Basle Soc	Colesberg
10 Jan 1844	Basle Soc	Colesberg
17 Jan 1844	LMS	Basel
4 May 1846	LMS	Colesberg
15 Aug 1846	LMS	Colesberg
24 Aug 1846	LMS	Colesberg

What do these things add up to? When letter content is taken into consideration, justification and blame are being counter-claimed around key points at contention: insensitivity to and antagonising those already working in an area (Philip and Read), versus jealousy of Gottlob's popular new ideas (GS); stirring up factionalism in local black and Khoi

populations (Philip and Read), versus attracting new people to the faith (GS); and careless and feckless use of funds (Philip and Read), versus other people behaving badly and letting Gottlob down (GS). Also, stepping back from blame-allocation, something interesting about ethnic and related categorisations in these letters comes into view. MCA provides some useful tools for thinking about the moral universe inscribed in epistolary exchanges regarding how people of different kinds and their behaviours are represented in relation to each other. For space reasons, one of Gottlob Schreiner's LMS letters, dated 17 January 1844, will be focused on in discussing this (see 'Action Research/Operationalizing a QLR Project/Extras' at [www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)).

This letter is concerned with the 'hand of God' placed over the preacher and what it required of Gottlob Schreiner, with him having no choice. This is seen as involving the death of a Schreiner baby and the family's inhospitable dwelling-place, and as subsequently requiring him to do and not do certain things. A 'we' category references 'us' as the preacher and church members, with particular roles within the church commented on. No ethnic categories are deployed, and while language groups – Sesotho and Dutch – are used to describe people, Gottlob's usage indicates that local Boers, white farmers, and mixed 'race' Griqua as well as Basuto people, are part of this inclusive 'we'. There is no ethnic hierarchy – although there is a sharp hierarchy distinguishing the preacher from 'the people' he ministers to. And insofar as there is an ethnic division, this concerns 'lawless' farmers, the Boers who were usurping land and water-sources locally, resulting in 'the people', implicitly Basutos and more humble white or coloured farm folk, consequently moving away.

How Gottlob Schreiner represents the moral order is quotidian, rather than his letter's prime concern, turns on the 'preacher and people' axis under God's hand, and is otherwise non-hierarchical and does not deploy racial categorizations. It is very different from a Rebecca Schreiner letter to the LMS, dated July 1845 (see 'Action Research/Operationalizing

a QLR Project/Extras’ at [www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)). This was written probably with publication in mind. However, its surface purpose is not of concern here, which is the more quotidian matter of the moral order it represents. Rebecca’s descriptions of groups of people – Basutos, Hottentots (Khoi), Griquas (mixed ‘race’ or in South African terms ‘coloured’) - often have qualifiers attached, like cannibalism, lying and other negative qualities. Place too comes into this moral universe and has ‘race’ aspects – the mission-station Basel (not Basle in Switzerland) is a totally barren place to Europeans but natives live there because they are ‘benighted heathen’. The letter inscribes a strong ‘we’, but this is very different from Gottlob’s ‘we’ of preacher and people, being instead the unit of Rebecca and Mr Schreiner, the missionary couple, with her as much part of ‘the work’ as he. The relationship of ‘we’ with ‘they’, the people, is an oppositional and hierarchical one in the letter – this is ‘we’ against ‘them’, rather than Gottlob’s inclusivity.

In Gottlob Schreiner’s letter, the representation of people in the moral universe is largely egalitarian and avoids ethnic evaluations, with the main hierarchy being God’s hand upon the preacher and his over the church. While suggestive, clearly investigation of his other letters to the LMS Directors, and also his family letters archived elsewhere, is needed to establish whether this is a more general feature of his letter-writing. And similarly regarding Rebecca Schreiner’s letters and whether or not they more generally position people in hierarchical and racialised ways with sharp moral meanings and evaluations attached. However, even if these are specifics, it is still clear that a MCA approach to analysing content provides a useful way of exploring moral order and racial categorisation in WWW letter-writings.

## THE FINDLAY SAMPLE

At the start of this discussion, drawing a sample of letters from the Findlay collection for analysis was noted and the basis of sampling outlined. The resulting sample of twenty-four letters in and of itself showed nothing other than that this was a neutral and efficient means of achieving a group of randomly selected letters. Analysis therefore focused on content and specifically use of MCDs in these letters. Categorisations explicitly or implicitly connected with ‘race’ or ethnicity appear in just four (see ‘Action Research/Operationalizing a QLR Project/Extras’ at [www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)). Three are bland unmarked (implied) references, of a kind which in the South African context and as used by whites obliquely indicates that someone is not white; and on the surface, these are non-hierarchical and non-evaluative – ‘Frederick ran for the carriage’, ‘Mrs S’s girl departed’ and ‘Old Ma Wils is packing poultry’ (E. Rolland 7.3.1850, J. Rose-Innes 6.10.1920, B. Findlay 23.12.1933). The other (C.R. Prance, 21 February 1933) features a long negative comment on Boer (normally ‘Afrikaner’ would be used by this date) character being deformed by ‘mixed blood’, with multiple negative references reinforcing each other. The strong ethnic/racial MCDs at work here suggest that examining other letters by this writer, a lawyer named CR Prance, might be useful.

All six Prance letters in the collection were analysed in MCD terms (see ‘Action Research/Operationalizing a QLR Project/Extras’ at [www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)). This demonstrated binary, hierarchical and negatively-evaluative MCDs across his letter-writing; and while these include negative ethnic and racial categories, they are by no means confined to this. Indeed, such comments seem almost measured compared with his depiction of women and political opponents, with mixed blood, celibacy and madness seen as interwoven and characterising these ‘Others’. But is this the result of ‘the times’ and the

1930s rise of Nationalism intertwined with support for Nazi Germany in South Africa, or something specific about Prance and how he represents himself and ‘Others’?

A helpful way of exploring this is to extend scrutiny to letters by other people written at the same point in time. It was not possible, again for logistical reasons, to include all letters with a 1933 date. However, ten were randomly selected. These are distributed across nine separate months between January and December, were written by six different people, and an MCD analysis was made. In broad outline, all the negatively-evaluative ‘race’ and most of the negative political categorisations appear in the letters of three writers, CR Prance, CE Baber and Victor (family name unknown) (see ‘Action Research/Operationalizing a QLR Project/Extras’ at [www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk)). These men were politically involved lawyers and jockeying for position among the emergent white elite being produced by Nationalist politics. In addition, negatively-evaluative MCDs were used by one woman letter-writer concerning hetero-normativity and implied anti-Semitism concerning a Jewish family (B. Findlay 23.12.1933).

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

Using a formal analysis to explore the WWW data discussed has thrown up a range of analytically interesting topics for in-depth attention; and as this has shown, it works best iteratively, going back and forth between content and structure of the data to pinpoint interesting features. In terms of the particular concerns of WWW, formal analysis is sensitive to factors that help register whiteness, its ‘Others’ and the changing racial order in the moral universe that this letter-writing represents. This is because the gaps, variance, temporal complexities etcetera thereby highlighted do not result by happenstance, but are a product of the referential aspects of letter-writing. They concern matters of life, death, war and the

routine and quotidian; and these referential aspects of letter-writing in the South African context clearly connect with the changing dimensions of its moral and racial order.

However, in drawing a random sample, the structure of the resultant data has indicated nothing more (or less) than the neutrality of the selection process. Also the ensuing analysis depends on letter content, which may, but also may not, throw up interesting material in ethnic/‘race’ terms, depending on the particular letters which are generated. Even so, taking the content of these letters in more analytically driven ways has enabled relevant issues to be explored, although because this depends on the letters sampled it cannot be guaranteed. But while random sampling on its own does not give the analytical benefits of a formal analysis, it does usefully add to the analytical armoury of QLR research by providing a suitably neutral instrument to support working across WWW’s very large datasets and is an essential aid.

The appropriate conclusion to draw, then, is that operationalizing WWW’s QLR methodology can best proceed on a formal analysis route, for this generates considerable sensitivity to issues concerning whiteness and related ethnic and ‘race’ categorisations around the gaps, changes, departures and ordering of the formal elements of the data, with sampling the large collections being an important secondary strategy. A formal approach also enables analysis to be started as soon as particular collections have complete meta-data recorded and so while further data collection continues, and it permits the analysis of content to be iteratively related back to structural aspects of the data. While these matters have been explored here in relation to one particular large-scale QLR project, Whites Writing Whiteness, the approach provides useful conceptual and methodological tools for organising and analysing other large longitudinal datasets as well.

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## BIOGRAPHY

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Findlay Collection, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

London Missionary Society Collection, Special Collections, SOAS, University of London, UK.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> WWW research continues until the end of 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Those on the Prices and the older Moffats are completed; the others are in progress.

<sup>3</sup> The latter is completed; the others are in progress.

<sup>4</sup> In progress.

<sup>5</sup> For space reasons, this component of WWW QLR methodology is not discussed in what follows, but see 'Project Blog/Peter Alexander's Marikana' at [www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk](http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk).